

author would have us believe. Fr Don-daine's theories of the conversion of the Languedocian heretics from 'absolute' to 'mitigated' dualism at the alleged Council of St Felix de Caraman about 1170 are appropriated entirely without inquiries into their reliability.

Fr Dondaine assumes, like Professor Wakefield, that the Cathars were one united group, whereas the evidence would seem to point to there being no single body of doctrine. When each group of Cathars is treated independently it is seen that each held only a number of doctrines similar to those of the Bogomils. Moreover, Yves Dossat has made a good case for the Council of St Felix never having taken place. This, added to Fr Dondaine's own admission that his conversion theory is pure hypothesis, renders the 'importation theory' distinctively 'not proven'.

Being largely content with the internal explanation of heresy, Wakefield never satisfactorily examines its external causes. Why should such alien ideas prove so attractive, and how in fact did they reach the South of France at all? Much is made of the 'upswelling of piety' of the eleventh and twelfth centuries, which seems a somewhat meagre description of the evangelical explosion of the time, and which in any case is not sufficient explanation in it-

self. Widespread alienation from a corrupt church and the hierarchy's disregard of increasing pressure for reform gave rise to wholesale desertion from orthodoxy, we are told. If this was so why were there not similar movements on a similar scale in earlier centuries, when corruption was equally widespread?

All in all it is Professor Wakefield's caution and brevity which defeats him. A great deal of worthwhile socio-economic detail is contained in the work but poor presentation and inadequate explanation detracts from its value. He suggests that the Church had become disastrously enmeshed in the feudal nexus, and that this social structure was breaking down in Languedoc: sections of the population were no longer fitting traditional roles. Yet he does not correlate this evidence to point out that Catharism, an essentially anti-feudal 'religion', achieved its greatest success in a highly sophisticated, wealthy, mercantilist, and increasingly de-feudalised state, with a degree of national consciousness unique in western Europe. An independent, heretical Languedoc would have been an undoubted threat to the rest of the feudal world.

At the end of the book one is left, rather sadly, with the impression of unfulfilled promise.

ALLAN WHITE, OP

DISCRETION AND VALOUR. Religious conditions in Russia and Eastern Europe, by Trevor Beeson. *Collins Fontana*, London, 1974. 60p.

Within little more than three hundred pages this book gives a broad and up-to-date survey of the condition of religion in the Communist-controlled states of eastern Europe. A thorny subject—but the British Council of Churches' committee which produced it has achieved a measure of objectivity that compares favourably with the sort of propaganda one usually reads. The book will be very valuable to all who wish to understand the very different situations obtaining in the various countries concerned.

The Roman Catholic Church in Poland and the Orthodox Church in Rumania are obviously the most flourishing and the least impeded in their work—indeed, one wishes the churches of Britain could show such good statistics. At the opposite end comes Albania, where all institutional religion has been stamped out. In some countries the Communist

state gives a diminishing amount of financial assistance and in countries like East Germany and Poland the churches still carry on social activities. Some valuable statistical information obviously lies behind much that is written about the smaller countries (unlike the USSR), but there is not enough indication as to whether the information comes from church or government or from both.

A large amount of space is given to the USSR, but the historical survey, which begins well, tails off when we come to the last hundred years. We are not made to feel the intolerable oppression and backwardness of the last period of tsarism and the utter ineffectiveness of the Church in combating these. Therefore the October Revolution seems to hang in the air, and the involvement of so many churchmen (inured to subservience to tsarism) with

counter-revolution and foreign intervention is not brought out strongly enough. Marxist philosophy was very far from being the only factor in promoting hostility between the Church and the Communist state.

It is common knowledge that pressure on the churches was relaxed by Stalin during the Second World War but that there was a recurrence of harassment during the latter part of the Khrushchev period. The past ten years have seen a great change for the better and much more cordial relations between church and state. Nobody really knows how many churches Khrushchev closed or how many were afterwards re-opened. Many elaborate exercises in the gentle art of extrapolation and projection from odd facts are no substitute for the hard statistics which neither church nor state has published. Phrases such as 'it is commonly believed' or 'Russian sources' (unidentified) do not get us very far, and this book is more wary than most of this sort of data.

What one can do, of course, is visit the USSR. I have done this 11 times in the past 17 years and I have seen churches there being freely visited and packed with devout and deeply 'involved' worshippers, and noted such things as the very large number of vocations to the priesthood, far exceeding the available places in the seminaries. In the Soviet Union everyone seems to be commenting these days on the increasing number of young well-educated people who are becoming interested in religion and some of whom are appearing more often in church. The complete absence of financial stringency and such things as the remarkable number of young bishops all point to a growingly hopeful situation. There are probably about 40 million

Orthodox believers, while the Baptists have about 2.5 million loosely attached to the central core of baptized, which numbers some 600,000 (figures from Church sources). Baptist services are extremely lively, and it is quite clear that, as *Discretion and Valour* points out, you cannot confine genuine religion to the 'underground church', the significance and size of which is usually grossly exaggerated in any case.

One of the merits of this book is the frank recognition of the fact that support by the churches for the peace policy of the Soviet Union (as well as, it may be added, for socialism) is the result of genuine conviction. People here seem often incapable of realising that the Cold-War attitude of anti-Communism and the naive acceptance of capitalism as the normal, apparently eternal framework for the Christian religion are alike honestly and sincerely rejected by Soviet Christians.

The vexed question of the importation of bibles, the indigenous printing of which is inadequate, is very sensibly discussed in the last chapter, together with themes such as the involvement of the eastern churches with the WCC. The bibliography at the end should have included the two splendid books by the American scholar John Shelton Curtiss, *Church and State in Russia* and *The Russian Church and the Soviet State*, and it would have been well at the same time to have omitted the extremely prejudiced *Patriarchs and Prophets* by Michael Bourdeaux, material from which reduces the objectivity of chapter 3 in some directions.

Trevor Beeson is to be congratulated for having worked up and re-written material from widely different sources into a very readable and very clear whole.

BERNARD O. FIELDING-CLARKE